

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

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CONYERS PRAISES DASCHLE, DODD FOR MOVING FORWARD, BLASTS SENATOR BOND FOR THREATENED FILIBUSTER OF CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION

In response to the Majority Leader Daschle's decision to move forward on election reform and Senator Kit Bond's threatened filibuster of election reform legislation, Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and co-author of the election reform bill (the "Martin Luther King, Jr. Equal Protection of Voting Rights Act"), issued the following statement:

"This was a Republican trap designed to kill election reform and Leader Daschle and Senator Dodd wisely refused to fall into it. While Senator Bond was willing to kill an entire bill over this issue, Democrats were not. Senators Schumer and Wyden deserve tremendous credit for attempting to strip out a provision that would disenfranchise tens of thousands of legal voters.

It is disappointing that Senator Bond has apparently decided to join the list of politicians that attempted to use parliamentary games to stop civil rights legislation. History is not on his side: Republican filibusters of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act were eventually overcome and we shall overcome again. Unfortunately for Senator Bond, this is part of a long pattern of hostility to civil rights, most recently reflected in his shameless demagoguery of Judge Ronnie White.

One has to wonder whether Senator Bond is truly concerned about voter fraud or simply interested in maximizing Republican electoral chances by diluting the voting strength of people of color. The Senator spins fanciful claims of voter fraud to justify his attempt to saddle first time voters with a photo ID requirement, but has not produced any evidence of widespread election fraud.

At the same time, African-American turnout increased by 140% in Missouri in 2000 largely on the strength of first time voters and leading to the defeat of Senator Bond's colleague, John Ashcroft. Senator Bond must be acting out of a concern for his future prospects for re-election.

I applaud Majority Leader Daschle for his courage and persistence in pushing this historic bill forward."

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